

# SARALA BIRLA PUBLIC SCHOOL

Birla Knowledge City, Mahilong, Ranchi  
CLASS-XII (2020-21)



Sub: English  
Assignment-2

## LITERATURE

### My Mother at Sixty-six (Poem)

**About the poet: Kamala Das (1934-2009)**

She is recognized as one of India's foremost poets. Her works are known for their originality, versatility and indigenous flavor of the soil. She has published many short stories and novels in English and Malayalam under the name 'Madhavikutty'.

#### **Theme of the poem**

My mother at sixty-six is a sensational poem, which captures the complex subtleties of human relationships in lyrical idiom, especially that of a mother and daughter. It describes the pain and fear of the poet of losing her mother due to harsh reality of life that is death. It describes ageing as a natural process, which indicates a single thread of thought interspersed with observations of the real world around and the way these are connected to the main idea.

The poem revolves around the theme of advancing age and the fear that adheres to its loss and separation. It is a sentimental account of the mother's approaching end through the eyes of the daughter smeared in the backdrop of nostalgia and fear. Nostalgia of the past (the time spent with the mother) and fear of the future without her.

#### **Summary of the poem with explanation**

*Driving from.....of a corpse*

The poet, in this poem describes her mother as she says that her mother is sixty-six years old and looks very weak and old. When the poet is on her way to the Cochin airport with her old mother sitting beside her, she looks at her closely and presents before us her image.

She compares her with a corpse. (similie is a figure of speech to show comparison between her mother's face and a corpse.) As she looks at her mother's pale and pallid face, she is struck with the horror and pain of losing her. The mother with the dozing face and open mouth is compared to a corpse. Here, the poet shows the typical love and affection which is present in a mother-daughter relation.

*and realized.....out of their homes*

The poet is pained and shifts her attention outside the car in order to drive out the negative feelings. She changes her sad mood. The scene outside the window is of growing life and energy. The rapidly sprinting trees alongside the merrily playing children symbolize life, youth and vitality. The poet here is reminded of her own childhood when her mother had been young whereas now she is encircled with the fear of losing her and that has made her insecure.

*but after the.....late winter's moon*

She is at the airport to take a flight. It indicates departure and separation which creates melancholy. As she bids goodbye to her mother, the image of the old, wan, worn out mother in the twilight of years strikes her again. Here again a similie is used to compare her mother with a late winter's moon whose light is obstacle by fog and mist As she looks old now, her personality is affected by it.

*And felt that.....smile and smile....*

The poet is feeling the pain of separation, leaving her mother and going. Also, her childhood fear of losing her mother which she feels that earlier was temporary but now, could be forever as she could die of old age, is haunting her. She is so pained that it is natural for her to cry but keeping a brave front she hides her tears and smiles.

She bids farewell to her mother and keeping her hope of seeing her again alive, says "see you soon, Amma". She hides her sorrow as she does not want to create a painful environment for her mother and conveys her that as she is enjoying her life similarly her mother should also be happy and enjoy her life.

### ***New/ Difficult words***

- 1) **doze**: a short, light sleep
- 2) **ashen**: very pale, like ash.
- 3) **corpse**: a dead body.
- 4) **sprinting**: *here*, shooting out of the ground.
- 5) **spilling**: *here*, to move out in great numbers.
- 6) **wan**: unnaturally pale, as from physical or emotional distress.
- 7) **ache**: pain.

### ***Related Questions:***

- 1) What is the kind of pain and ache that the poet feels?
- 2) What do the parting words of the poet and her smile signify?

### ***Value based question:***

Describe the theme of the poem in contrast to harsh reality of life.

### ***Reference To the Context***

***1. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:***

I looked again at her, wan, pale  
as a late winter's moon and felt that old  
familiar ache, my childhood's fear,  
but all I said was see you soon, Amma,  
all I did was smile and smile and smile .....

- (a) What was the poet's childhood fear?
- (b) What were the poet's parting words?
- (c) What is the poetic device used in these lines?
- (d) Why did the poet smile and smile?

## **WRITING SKILLS**

### ***Classified Advertisements: ( As done in class 11)***

It comes in short columns of the newspaper. It follows certain format under different heads.

#### ***1) Sale/Purchase of property or vehicle***

1. Begin with: Available/ For Sale / For Purchase/ Wanted
2. Type of accommodation/vehicle ( Mention the reason for sale)

3. Description: **a) Property**....No. of floors, Size, no. of rooms, fittings,

Location and surroundings.

**b) Vehicle**....Model, year of manufacture, modifications (if any)

Colour, accessories, condition and mileage done

**c) Household goods**....Brand, model, condition, utility

4. Price expected or offered

5. Address and contact no.

## **2) Missing persons or pets**

1. Brief physical description- **a) Person**....Height, complexion, built, identity marks, clothes, accessories

Name, age, any health related issues about the missing person

**b) Pets**....Name, breed, colour, fur etc

Special features (if any)

2. Time, date and place of missing

3. Details of reward, if any

4. Contact address and Phone no.

### ***Related questions:***

1. You wish to purchase a flat in Ooty. Write an advertisement in not more than 50 words detailing your requirements in the classified columns of the newspaper.

2. Your father is missing from his office since four days. Draft a suitable advertisement in the classified columns of the newspaper.